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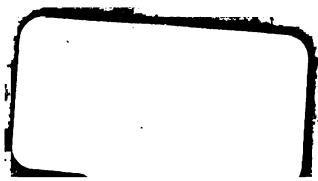
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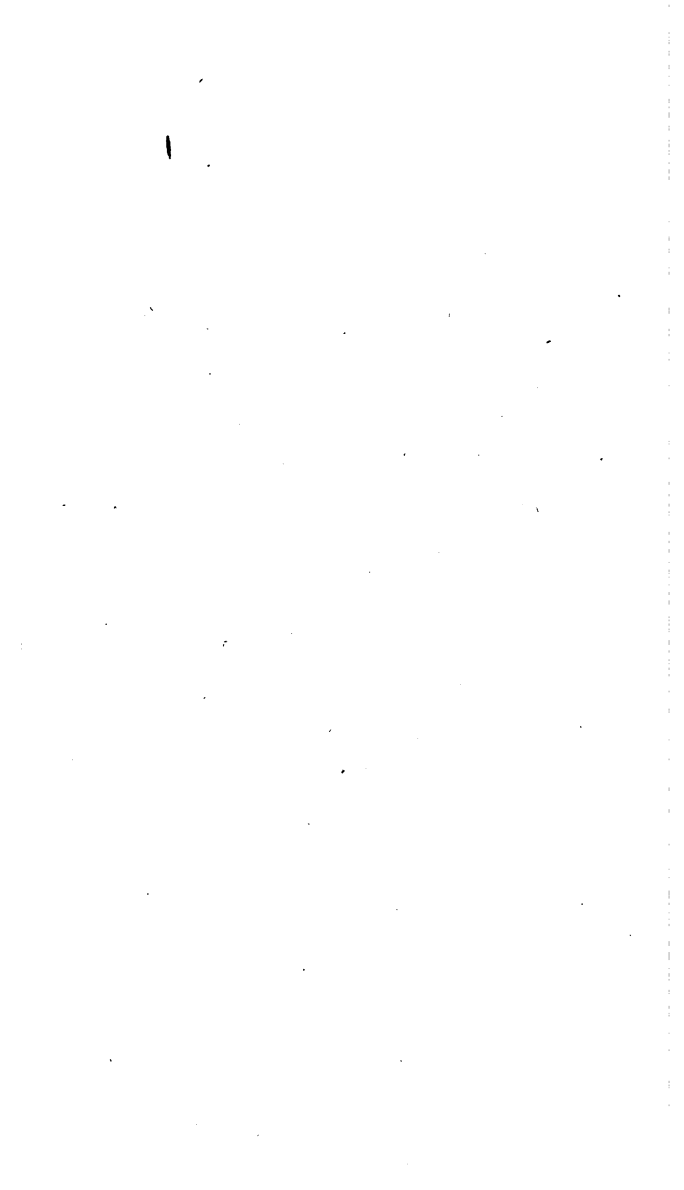


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A TALE OF WARNING.



Engraved by G. Knight.

Munro taking leave of his Wife.

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A

TALE OF WARNING;

OR THE
VICTIMS OF INDOLENCE.

INTENDED FOR
THE USE OF YOUNG LADIES.

BY MISS WOODLAND.

THE SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

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London : Printed by E. M. Dallas,
Bow Street, Covent Garden.

A TALE OF WARNING:

OR,

THE VICTIMS OF INDOLENCE.

CHAP. I.

Few persons are sufficiently aware of the pernicious tendency of indolence; or of the misery too frequently entailed on those who have been suffered to indulge in this vice. Indolence is a disease which, if too late attended to, can never be cured! It is as inveterate as it is infectious, and often proves the destruction of families.

Agatha St. Hubert, a young lady of good family but little or no fortune,

and very lovely in her person, lost her parents in her infancy, and was left under the guardianship of kind-hearted but weak-minded persons, who, having no children of their own, became dotingly fond of, and spoiled the beautiful orphan. Her disposition was mild, and affectionate, and her capacity naturally quick; but she was indolent, and her indolence was weakly indulged; so that she grew up totally deficient in that housewifely knowledge and industry so necessary to every young woman, and almost incapable of mental or bodily exertion.

Agatha was too indolent to be very lively, or to cultivate those talents, and pleasing manners, which render even plain women agreeable. She hated needlework, and was shamefully negligent in her person; the only

pleasure she was capable of enjoying was that of reading; but the weak indulgence of her guardians had suffered her to imbibe a vitiated taste: the books she read, far from improving or fortifying her mind, tended to enervate her understanding, and lead her imagination astray. She could only endure romances, and such light novels as did not require the trouble of thinking. For those she had imbibed a pernicious passion: she read them night and day, and delighted to fancy herself a captive princess, whose chains some valiant knight was destined to break; or the persecuted ward of a cross old guardian; an angelic beauty, who sighed for liberty and love in a cottage.

With these disadvantages, good tempered and beautiful as she was, the society of Agatha was shunned

by the intelligent and the active. This gave her little pain, for she was too indolent to take much pleasure in such society ; but that no man should extravagantly love her, as the fascinating Angelina, the charming Celestina, the incomparable Rosamunda, or any other of the heroines of romance, were beloved, was a severe mortification. Her person indeed had been greatly admired, but she reached her four and twentieth year without having created any serious attachment. Her guardians had died a few months before this period, leaving her the little property they possessed, and the disposal of her own small fortune entirely at her discretion.

Chance however, soon after the death of her guardians, introduced a Scotch officer to her acquaintance, somewhat older than herself, who was

an enthusiastic admirer of beauty, and who had never before seen a face and form which so forcibly struck his imagination. Agatha was certainly uncommonly beautiful, and indolence gave her a languor, which to some men is pleasing. Being of an ardent disposition, and at moments rash in his actions, Captain Monroe almost immediately declared his passion in the language of an Oroondate, and solicited the fair Agatha's hand, as a blessing on which his future happiness depended.

Archibald Monroe was a young man of six and twenty, intelligent of countenance, fine of form, and with manners extremely agreeable. His fortune was very small ; but fortune is the last thing young ladies, who spend their time in reading novels and romances, consider. It ought indeed

at all times to be a secondary consideration. Agatha, whose disposition, though indolent, as I before said, was affectionate, and who indulged in all the folly of romance, was not long insensible to the vows of her enthusiastic lover, and in a few weeks they were married: though she was rather won by his temporary folly than the intrinsic worth of his character.

For some months, Agatha and Monroe were perfectly happy; he was too much in love to see her faults, and still played the part of the rapturous lover; a part most adapted to Agatha's vitiated taste: she was never tired of listening to his raptures. Oh, how short-lived is such happiness! Every woman of sense must prefer that rational and lasting affection, which shows itself not in words but actions, and which is not founded on

momentary caprice, or an inflated imagination, but on that esteem, which an excellent heart, amiable manners, and a good understanding create.

Though by birth a native of Scotland, Monroe resided in London, when his military duty did not call him elsewhere, being fond of that choice society, and the inexhaustible sources of amusement and knowledge, which the metrópolis affords. Though sometimes rash in his decisions, he was a young man of talent, information, and a most exquisite sensibility. His love of virtue was enthusiastic, and, though his feelings were acute to an extreme, he had the most affectionate of human hearts. When excited, he was choleric; but his temper was by no means severe. He did not, though fond of society, indulge in the

extravagance and dissipation to which officers in general are too prone: his income was limited; but, had he possessed a large fortune, his heart and understanding would have made him apply it to worthy uses. His companions were men of sense, and well-informed, and his amusements were rational, and taken in moderation.

During the honey-moon, which they spent in the country, Archibald devoted his time exclusively to his wife, and she willingly laid down her novels, to listen to his incessant and animated praise. In the fourth month however, on their return to the metropolis, Monroe began to be accustomed to the beautiful face of Agatha; the novelty ceased, and his raptures gradually died away, to be succeeded by a sentiment more lasting, and equally tender, though not so impassioned.

He now expected to find in his wife a rational and agreeable companion, who would attend to her family, share in his pleasures, entertain his friends, and exert herself to please her husband, lover, and friend.

Of exertion, alas, Agatha was incapable. When her husband ceased to address her like a hero of romance, and wished to converse rationally, she had nothing to say. If he read instructive and entertaining books to amuse her of an evening, she yawned, and fell asleep. She had totally neglected to keep up the little practice she had given to music, and cultivate a voice naturally fine. She was too indolent to like walking; dancing was her aversion; going to the opera or concerts, in which her husband particularly delighted, demanded too much preparation of dress; and in.

company she was languid, and remiss in those little attentions which are indispensable. She had paid a little more attention to dress during the first months of her marriage; but the exertion soon became irksome, and she sunk into her old slovenly habits. In domestic concerns too she was culpably negligent.

Monroe awoke from a dream of rapture, to the most painful alarm for his future happiness! He found that his imagination had gifted his wife with mental charms and qualities she did not possess; and her beauty, before the object of his idolatry, now became a source of regret to the disappointed husband.

“Had she not been so handsome,” thought Archibald, “she would not have been indulged in this baneful indolence! She would have felt the ne-

cessity of cultivating her mind, and making herself agreeable. She would have been taught how to govern her family, and made fit to educate her children: as it is, she is almost incapable of every domestic and social duty. Yet surely, if she be but kindly shown the precipice on which she stands, if her husband conjure her to rouse from the lethargy of indolence, affection will make her struggle against its pernicious influence, and her struggles will finally be victorious."

Monroe thought like a young inexperienced man, who had little knowledge of human nature, and the inveterate force of habit: he expected almost impossibilities, and, by forming sanguine hopes of success, only increased the bitterness of disappointment.

It is true, when he reasoned with

all the manly energy of virtue and affection, and conjured Agatha to rouse herself, and shake off the lethargy of indolence, she listened to him patiently, and felt a momentary terror of the evils her husband so forcibly pictured, and a wish to be all that he could desire; but these were feeble, compared to the rooted power which indolence had obtained. She made temporary but weak efforts; and had not the virtuous courage to persevere.

CHAP. II.

THAT young married women may be fully aware how dangerous it is to sink into indolent habits, and to lose that desire of pleasing, which before marriage is perhaps carried a little too far, I will relate an instance or two of the disgust the indolence of Agatha gave her husband, and of the indignant displeasure it excited.

Monroe was invited one day to dine with a superior officer, his countryman, a gentleman of fortune and merit, who had been married two years to a very amiable, though plain woman, and was requested to bring his wife. The morning of that day, Monroe had occasion to go a few miles out of

town on business, but at breakfast time he begged Agatha particularly to pay some attention to her dress, and to exert herself to please :

“Because,” said the kind husband, “I should not like Colonel M'Donald to make disadvantageous comparisons between you and his wife, who, I understand, though plain in her person, is a charming woman, agreeable in her manners, and pleasing in her appearance. Do not, dear Agatha, from a culpable indolence, expose yourself to merited censure. Your personal beauty will only make criticism doubly severe, because it will excite the envy of most of your own sex, who have been less favoured by nature. I do not, my love, wish you to be fine, but let your dress be neat, and becoming; do not, as it frequently happens, wait till the last moment to dress : the colonel

dines early, is punctual to his hour, and does not admire fashionable ill manners : beside, he is almost a stranger to us, we never before were at his house, and it would be extremely rude to treat him with as little ceremony as that with which people are too apt to treat an intimate friend."

Agatha promised to observe her husband's instructions, and Monroe, telling her he should fetch her at four o'clock precisely, and begging that he might find her ready, mounted his horse and rode away.

After he was gone, Agatha, not having the good custom of usefully employing her time, went as usual to shut herself up in her dressing-room, to read of sighing damsels and despairing swains. Unluckily, over night she had received a newly published romance from the circulating library,

to which she was a constant subscriber; this romance, which was in three thick volumes, and filled with the most extravagant and marvellous adventures, so entirely occupied her, that the morning was gone before she was conscious it was noon, and she never thought of her engagement till she was electrified by the well-known rap of Monroe at the street door. The clock just then struck four.

“ Good heavens ! ” exclaimed Agatha, “ it is four o’clock, and I am not dressed ; I had quite forgotten my engagement, and this is no doubt Monroe. What will he say ? ”

She hastily threw the books into a drawer, rang the bell for the maid to help her, and with trembling agitation began her toilet. Susan, the maid, came into the room.

“ That was your master, was it not ? ”

asked Agatha, hoping she might have been mistaken.

"Yes, Ma'am," replied the girl; "and he is coming up stairs, to see if you are dressed."

"For Heaven's sake make haste and help me, Susan, or your master will be out of patience. I had no idea of the time: indeed I had forgotten we were to dine out."

Monroe now entered the apartment, and seeing Agatha had scarcely begun her toilet, he angrily said:

"So, Agatha, you have paid much attention to my request! What can be the reason I find you not half-dressed? It is past four o'clock!"

"Indeed, my dear Archibald, I had no idea of the hour! I am very sorry to keep you waiting, but only have a little patience, and I shall be ready in a few minutes."

Monroe, highly offended, made no answer, but walked out of the room. Agatha, whose indolence extended even to the most trivial and commonplace things, was very slow at her toilet; and, though aided by Susan, it was full half an hour before she was ready. Susan could not be expected to have taste or great neatness. Agatha had very little of either, and she was so flurried that she scarcely knew what she did; so that, instead of being better, she was even worse dressed than usual. When she came down to her husband, he looked at her with indignant displeasure, and suffered the servant to assist her to the coach.

When they were in the carriage, Monroe, sighing deeply, exclaimed:

“I am an unfortunate man! I married with the fond but foolish hope of

being loved by my wife; but I have daily proof that she is not only indifferent to my person but to my peace of mind. She heeds nothing but the gratification of her selfish indolence, and she is obstinately blind to the misery she is bringing on herself! Good God! why was my reason intoxicated by that fatal beauty, which, instead of a blessing, will be a curse to yourself and me. Why was I so infatuated? Why did I suffer my imagination to gift you with those qualities, without which no married woman can do her duty, or make her husband happy? Fool! Rash fool that I was! It is in vain that I daily appeal to your affection, or that I endeavour, by less gentle reasoning, to rouse you from the lethargy of indolence. You are determined to make yourself and me miserable."

Agatha, who felt conscious that the displeasure of her husband was just, and whose temper was beside gentle and affectionate, made no attempt to defend herself, but sat in mournful silence till they reached the colonel's house. The company, which was numerous, were all assembled, and the colonel was impatiently expecting the arrival of Captain Monroe and his lady, to sit down to dinner.

"Why, Captain," said Col. M'Donald, after the first compliments were over, "I thought that you, like me, were so unfashionable as to be a punctual man; but I find I was mistaken."

"I am too sensible of the justice of your reproach," answered Monroe, "to attempt to excuse myself, and plead guilty."

"It was not my husband's fault,

Sir," said Agatha, blushing deeply; "I only am to blame; I forgot the hour, and kept him waiting."

Monroe, whose temper though irascible was very forgiving, softened by the candid acknowledgment of his wife, and pitying the visible distress she felt, looked kindly at Agatha, and good naturedly said,

"Well, my dear, you will be less forgetful another time, and I am persuaded the colonel will have the goodness to excuse our first offence."

"Nay, my dear Sir, could I bear malice to a lady," replied Colonel M'Donald good humoredly, "I should deserve to be disbanded: beside, I have always found Maria [the colonel's wife] so punctual, that I am inclined to believe that the ladies, generally speaking, are more exact on these occasions than we are. I was a sad

negligent fellow, before I married. So, my dear Madam," continued the colonel, leading Agatha into the dining parlour, "do not blame yourself for a forgetfulness which I am persuaded was accidental."

This good-humored politeness gave relief both to Monroe and his wife, and the amiable mistress of the house shewed them the most marked attention.

Monroe, though his affectionate and forgiving temper would not suffer him long to feel resentment against his wife, could not help perceiving, with great pain of heart, the striking contrast between Agatha and the colonel's lady.

Mrs. M'Donald, though her person was plain, had a more prepossessing appearance than the beautiful Mrs. Monroe, because she dressed with ele-

gant simplicity, and neatness. The manners of Agatha were also languid, without being attractive; she could only converse on trivial subjects, and, as I before informed the reader, she was too indolent to cultivate the little talents she possessed, to give her friends and husband pleasure. Mrs. M'Donald was well informed, yet modest, engaging in her manners, capable of conversing with persons of understanding, and yet not too proud, when hospitality or good breeding required it, to mix in light and frivolous conversation. She sang and played, though not in a masterly style, well enough to entertain her friends, and amuse her husband; and her alacrity to oblige made her generally liked. Her behaviour toward the colonel was equally amiable and judicious; she was attentive and affec-

tionate, without appearing to be officious; to please him was evidently the first wish of her heart, yet she made no parade of her love.

Monroe, when he compared his beautiful and insipid wife to the plain but agreeable Mrs. M'Donald, could not suppress a rising sigh, and a secret wish that Agatha, at the loss even of her beauty, could resemble her.

The colonel, who was a man of an excellent heart and understanding, and who had married not from a sudden and rash passion, but affection founded on esteem, and a knowledge of the mind and disposition of the woman he loved, was dotingly fond of his Maria: he would not have parted with her for the most beautiful wife in the world. Her amiable qualities and estimable conduct made her ap-

pear lovely in his eyes. He soon discovered the mental inferiority of Agatha, and thought her unworthy of the warm-hearted and noble-minded Monroe, whose high-souled qualities had been reported to him, previous to his introduction to that gentleman. When their guests were retired, Col. M'Donald, taking his wife's hand, said:

“ I am daily more and more sensible of your worth, my dear Maria; and find occasion to regret that my friends have not each been as fortunate as myself, in the choice of a wife. Poor Monroe ! How it grieves me to think he is married to a woman so unworthy of him, so incapable of making him happy. By what strange fatality, or perversion of judgment, could he love a mere automaton ? She is very beautiful, it must be allowed; but even her beauty loses its attraction,

by the little attention she pays to her person. She has neither talents, nor conversation, to atone for her want of taste and neatness. How could a young man of his soul fall in love with a woman, every way so little calculated to please persons of sense and feeling? Oh, Maria, had he married such a woman as yourself, he would be happy. I saw the esteem and admiration with which he regarded you! Nay, I fear, I perceive that he was painfully aware of the deficiency of his soul-less wife, whom he nevertheless, I am told, tenderly loves. Heaven grant that he may be blind to her imperfections! If he perceive them, he must be miserable! Never did I more forcibly feel my own happiness, and your excellence, than I did this night. I well saw that my friends sympathized in my feelings, and that,

if they had spoken their sentiments, they would have acknowledged that the beautiful Mrs. Monroe was not to be compared with my dear Maria."

Mrs. M'Donald listened to the merited and animated praise of her husband with modest pleasure, and, though her good nature sought excuses for the mental deficiency of Agatha, she could not help pitying the amiable and interesting Monroe.

We will now take leave of the happy pair, and return to Agatha and her husband.

Monroe returned home, in his own despite, discontented and unhappy. Agatha, in addition to her deficiency in personal neatness and elegance, in his eyes appeared to have been more remiss than usual in those pleasing attentions and agreeable manners, which are the life and charm of social

CHAP. III.

ANOTHER more flagrant instance of the culpable indolence, in which the self-devoted Agatha indulged, will give the reader some idea of the torment a man of Monroe's exquisite sensibility and justness of thinking must suffer, with such a woman, beautiful and mild though she was.

Monroe had an uncle, an elderly gentleman, who had been his guardian, and for whom he had a filial respect. This uncle, who resided in Scotland, came up to London, about eight months after his nephew's marriage, to prepare for a voyage to India; having, through the interest of some friends, obtained a lucrative post, in the civil department, at Madras. He

was only to stay a few days in town, and, as he had no house, Monroe invited him to occupy an apartment in his ; which offer Mr. Strathmore, who had a paternal regard for his nephew, and who was a frank plain-dealing man, readily accepted.

Monroe, before that gentleman came, entreated his wife to see that his room was made comfortable, and to show him every attention, not only because he was a near and dear relation, to whom he lay under serious obligations, but because, though an excellent and friendly man, Mr. Strathmore was apt to take offence at the slightest omission, and to think himself neglected.

Agatha, according to custom, promised to observe her husband's injunctions, and, as usual, was guilty of culpable neglect. With her accus-

tomed indolence, she trusted to the servant: Susan assured her that she would make the apartment of Mr. Strathmore comfortable, and Agatha never went to see that every thing was neat, and as it ought to be, as every good housewife would have done. The maid, knowing her mistress would be satisfied with her assurance that every thing was right, and that she would not take the trouble to see herself that nothing was neglected, instead of making the room neat, and comfortable, left every thing in disorder, and was so shamefully careless as to put sheets on the bed that had not been aired.

In the evening the old gentleman arrived, supped with Monroe, and being a man of the world, soon formed an opinion that was not to the advantage of Agatha. When bed-time came

however, he retired to his chamber, and employed some time in looking over papers, after which he undressed himself; but he had not laid many minutes before he was perfectly convinced that the sheets were damp, and consequently his health in danger. His resolution was soon taken. Without disturbing his nephew, he rang for a candle, dressed himself, and, walking softly down stairs, left the house to seek a lodging at a hotel.

The surprise of Monroe, the next morning, when he found what had happened, may well be conceived: he could not at first conjecture the cause; but he knew there must be something essentially wrong. An immediate and determined inquiry was begun, and Monroe too soon discovered a very justifiable reason for his uncle's conduct.

It would be vain to attempt to describe the feelings of Monroe, for feelings such as his were can only be conceived and understood by a husband. Agatha felt pain, but it was of too confused and indistinct a kind to teach her any wholesome lesson of amendment.

I leave the reader to imagine what were the indignation and distress of an old gentleman, remarkably orderly in his habits, who had a terror of damp beds from having once caught a dangerous illness by sleeping in one, and who was tenacious of the most trifling attention!

In the forenoon, having breakfasted where he slept, Mr. Strathmore returned, that he might account to his nephew for the seeming impropriety of his conduct; but his return was with a determination not to stay in a

house so disorderly, and where he had been treated with so little respect. No less grieved than ashamed by the conduct of his wife, Monroe, almost afraid to meet the eye of his uncle, knew not what to say: at last he made a feeble attempt to apologize.

To this Mr. Strathmore, who was a man that could not curb his passion, and that spoke his feelings in rather too blunt a manner, answered angrily:

“Yes! it is very comfortable for a man of my age to be obliged to seek a lodging through the streets of London at midnight, or run the risk of losing my life, by lying in damp sheets.”

Monroe darted an indignant look at his wife, who, trembling and confused, scarcely was able to sit on her chair. The old gentleman, too angry to notice her confusion, thus continued:

“ But this will be the last time I shall expose myself to meet such neglect from relations; I will not trouble you another night, Madam; and I am sorry my nephew prevailed on me to come.”

Agatha, self-condemned and ready to sink with shame, had not the power even to attempt making an apology: but Monroe, vexed to the soul, and eager to convince his respected relation that no intentional neglect had been shown him, went up to the old gentleman, and, warmly pressing his hand, said,

“ My dear uncle, pray let me prevail on you to excuse this shameful negligence! We will take care that it shall not be repeated. My wife would not, for the world, have shown intentional neglect, or disrespect, to so near and dear a relation; but she is unfortu-

nately ignorant of household affairs, and trusted to persons who pretended to be better informed. She will be inconsolable, if you leave us in anger! Pray, let me prevail on you, dear uncle, to stay."

"I shall not leave you in anger," replied Mr. Strathmore, softened by the concern his beloved nephew shewed, and the visible distress of Agatha; "but you must excuse me, nephew, from staying at your house. I am a particular man, and should give a great deal of trouble, which it is better to avoid. I am willing to believe that my niece, as you say, did not mean any intentional disrespect; but she must excuse my frankly telling her, that nothing is so necessary as for the mistress of a family to understand how to govern and direct her servants, and that, if she be ignorant of household

affairs, she ought to apply with resolute perseverance to make herself well acquainted with them. I see my niece with a novel in her hand, the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning! Excuse me, niece, but you might employ your time better. The mistress of a family should only read at proper times, and such books as will improve as well as amuse the mind. If you value your future happiness, do not indulge in such indolent and pernicious habits. By the mildness with which you hear me, your disposition and temper I can see are excellent; I therefore feel it my duty to warn you against a defect, which, if not corrected, may have fatal consequences."

How inveterate must the force of habit be, when lessons so mortifying, and warnings so repeated, could not

effect any lasting change in a young woman, whose heart was good, and who wished to make her husband happy :

Mr. Strathmore, though his displeasure was softened, could not be prevailed upon to stay at the house of his nephew ; but he visited him frequently, and they parted with mutual esteem and regret. The old gentleman, in his visits, saw so many instances of unconquerable indolence in Agatha, that he became seriously alarmed for the future happiness of his beloved nephew, and, on quitting London, wrote a letter to Agatha, in which he severely censured her conduct, and solemnly exhorted her to rouse herself to exertion. The following were its contents :

“ *Niece,*

“ You will perhaps think the liberty I am about to take is unpardonable ; but the near relationship which subsists between myself and your husband, the sincere affection I bear him, and the earnest desire I have to prevent your being mutually unhappy, give me the right, even at the risk of offending you, frankly to make you acquainted with my sentiments, and warn you to shake off that excess of indolence which, unless it be timely corrected, will prove your bane through life.

“ Your temper is mild, and your heart appears to be excellent ; you love my nephew, who certainly is most worthy of being loved ; yet I am sorry to say, you neglect his advice, and give him continual subject of dissatisfaction, and, I plainly perceive

that, if you do not greatly alter, you will in the end make him and yourself miserable.

“ You must daily feel that the indolence in which you indulge, subjects you to repeated mortification ; is it not strange then, that you should wilfully persist in habits which will soon make you unfit even to attend to the most trivial occurrences, much more to fulfil the high and honourable duties of a wife and mother ?

“ My nephew is a kind husband ; he is tenderly attached to you, but he has too much understanding, and too nice a discrimination of right and wrong, not to feel the danger, and, permit me to say, the culpability of those indolent habits to which I now seriously call your attention. I daily witness the pain of heart such habits inflict, and the difficulty with which your

husband, partial as he is, can refrain from giving utterance to his feelings.

“ Pardon the freedom, niece, with which I enforce these disagreeable truths. I do justice to your good qualities; but I see the precipice on which you stand! I tremble for the future! I would, if possible, rouse you to a thorough sense of your danger! If you love your husband, if you value your own peace, be timely warned! Shake off this baneful indolence; it will rob you of your husband's love! it will bring misery on yourself, on him, and on your innocent offspring! Once more reflect on consequences, and be warned!

“ Your sincere well-wisher,

“ though disapproving Uncle,

“ **DEGALD STRATHMORE.**”

P. S. I leave it to your discretion,

to shew this letter, or keep it concealed from my nephew. I am the last man on earth to wish to create any coldness between you: but let me again conjure you to be timely advised; and, before it is too late, rouse yourself from the pernicious apathy of indolence."

This letter, notwithstanding its severity, was read by Agatha without resentment, and at the moment it made something like a strong impression on that lady: she felt that the censure of Mr. Strathmore, though severe, was just, and that his intentions were kind; and she promised herself that she would observe his friendly admonitions: but Agatha, fearing lest the letter should by accident fall into the hands of Monroe, who she was conscious had conceived serious displeasure at her repeated negligence, im-

mediately committed it to the flames : the impression it had made soon died away, and the excellent advice and solemn warning it contained were as easily forgotten.

The concern and vexation Monroe felt at his uncle's quitting his house were great, and the displeasure the culpable negligence of his wife excited was no less so. His keen reproaches were listened to, by Agatha, with her accustomed mildness ; but they produced no lasting good effect.

The peace of Monroe, who had married with sanguine and rational views of happiness, by these repeated proofs of inveterate indolence received a deep wound ; and Agatha, who saw his smiles replaced by frowns, and his affectionate admonitions changed to angry expostulation and keen reproach, was herself, notwithstanding

the apathy of her character, far from being happy. She had conceived, not a rational affection for, but a romantic idolatry of her husband, which the alteration of his manner, conscious as she was that he had just cause to complain, did not in the least diminish: yet, such had been the enervating tendency of her education, and so rooted was indolence, that she could not rouse herself to effectual exertion.

CHAP. IV.

THUS a twelvemonth passed, unhappily on both sides. Agatha, at length, found herself near the period of becoming a mother. The dormant tenderness of Monroe was awakened, and he already felt a parent's anxiety for the innocent little being who was soon to see the light. His heart again revived to hope; he flattered himself that maternal love would effect a reformation, which his remonstrances had failed to produce. He saw the woman whom he had adored, and whom, notwithstanding her defects, he still tenderly loved, in the most interesting, the most endearing of situations; he again viewed her with fond

partiality, sought excuses for the faults he justly blamed, and domestic harmony was for a time restored.

Agatha became the happy mother of a fine boy, to the inexpressible delight of Monroe, who had passionately wished for a son, knowing how unfit his wife was to form the mind of a female child, and purposing to trust to none but himself for the education of their little Archibald.

"I thought a month since, my Agatha," said the tender husband, three weeks after the birth of their child, as he sat by the side of his wife, and gazed on her with anxious affection, "that it was impossible for me to love you better! How did I deceive myself! I was not then a father! The mother of my child is even tenfold dearer to me than she was before! Her claim is more tender! more sa-

cred! I feel that my very existence is blended in hers! Oh, be careful, my Agatha, of your health! you must feel that it is no less precious to your idolizing husband, than it is necessary to our child! Sweet babe," continued Monroe, gently taking the infant from its mother's arms, and nestling it to his bosom with a father's tender pride, "sweet babe! how fondly shall I cherish thee! Thou wilt be the bond of the future happiness of thy parents! Thy dear mother, by her watchful tenderness and cares, will acquire an eternal claim on my affection and esteem. Blessed be the day that gave thee to our mutual love! I can scarcely believe the excess of my happiness! Here, my love, take the little cherub: he is putting up his little mouth in a very significant manner; he will cry if I keep him longer. I can only give

him kisses; on you he is dependent for nourishment; when he is grown up, how sensibly will he feel what he owes to his tender mother! How assiduously will he endeavour to repay her maternal cares! Oh, Agatha, nothing can equal the exquisite feelings of this moment! I see you safe, with your infant in your arms, exercising the tender, the endearing duties of a mother! You are doubly lovely in my eyes! and the tender interest you excite can only be imagined by the doting husband. Oh, Agatha, would you exchange our present pure felicity, the tender admiration of your husband, for the languid apathy which indolence creates? for that pernicious self-indulgence which brings on dissatisfaction, contention, and finally domestic misery? No! You are now made sensible of the danger of such

indulgence, and you will not in future sacrifice our mutual peace to excess of indolence. I press you to my heart, with the delightful conviction that you will continue to be a good mother, and that I shall be a most fortunate husband!"

Noble-minded and affectionate, but too sanguine Monroe! What bitter disappointment, what cruel woes await thee! Alas, must a heart like thine be prematurely withered by unmerited calamity? Must thy fond hopes be blasted, thy pure affection meet so ill a reward? Can the wife whom thou so tenderly lovest be the murderess of thy peace? Oh, how my heart bleeds for thee, too confiding and generous Monroe!

During some months the parents enjoyed uninterrupted felicity: the child was remarkably healthy, and

had a good nurse. Agatha, from time to time tenderly yet impressively cautioned against neglect, though she nursed the child but little herself, took care that he was properly treated, and Monroe, seeing that she strove to be a good mother, began to view her indolence in other respects with less disgust and alarm.

In the zenith of their renewed felicity however, war broke out, and Monroe, whose circumstances in time of peace would not suffer him to resign his commission, was ordered with his regiment to the West Indies. That was a cruel stroke! He might for years be separated from his wife and child; nay, perhaps, such is the uncertainty of a soldier's life, he might never see them again! He would gladly have taken them with him, but his tender anxiety for Aga-

tha's health, which was delicate, would not suffer him to make the proposal.

Agatha herself was almost broken-hearted at the separation ; but, with a child in arms, to encounter the fatigues of a long voyage would have been an exertion beyond her powers. She wept, and indulged in useless regret, but she had not the fortitude to propose to follow the husband she so dearly loved, whose manly heart was wrung with anguish at parting with two objects the dearest to him on earth. Again his fears returned, lest Agatha, having no friend to warn her of its fatal consequences, should fall into excess of indolence, and that his child might be neglected. The thought was agony ! In the most solemn and pathetic manner, he conjured his wife conscientiously to fulfil

the sacred duties of a mother, and not suffer indolence to conquer the virtuous resolution she had hitherto observed.

“ Agatha,” said the tender father, while he clasped his smiling infant, who was only five months old, to his heart, and tears forced their way down his manly cheek, “ I leave our common treasure to your watchful affection : consider the charge as sacred. Our Archibald is now a fine healthy child ; do not, when I return, let me find him sickly ; for nothing but ill management, or neglect, can produce such a change. Were I to see my boy an object only of misery to himself, and pity to others, I should look with horror on the unnatural mother who could so neglect her child : nay, my peace would receive a mortal wound, and domestic happiness would

be irrevocably lost. Forgive my anxious fears, dearest Agatha; it is not the goodness of your heart I doubt, it is the baneful indulgence of indolence that is to be dreaded. For my sake, for the sake of your child, and as you value our common happiness, let me conjure you to guard against this pernicious indulgence. I may perhaps fall in a foreign land, and never return to the dear objects of my warmest affection! Oh, Agatha! Should cruel war leave you a widow, and our child fatherless, remember that your husband confided him to your vigilant tenderness; that with his dying breath, he will invoke blessings on the dear objects of his solicitude; and that his heart was wrung to leave them deprived of a husband's and a father's tender protection."

Such were the parting words of Monroe!!

Agatha hung weeping upon his neck, and promised solemnly to observe his injunctions. Archibald tore himself with difficulty from the arms of his beloved wife. In spite of the solemn promise she had made, his heart was wrung with fears of the future. Alas, his fears, as we shall presently find, were too just! Unfortunate Monroe! The dangers and hardships you will have to encounter are trifles, compared to the heart-breaking affliction which hereafter awaits you! Better had you perished on the sanguinary field, than have returned to find your dearest hopes blasted, your peace for ever destroyed! Accursed effects of indolence! Who would not die, rather than live to be the destruction of those to whom every endearing tie attaches them!

On the departure of her husband,

Agatha, instead of rousing her mind worthily to fulfil those duties which more than ever demanded her attention, sunk into a stupor of grief; which, for the first two days, rendered her incapable of acting. A letter however, which she received from her beloved husband, roused her to temporary exertion. The following were its contents :

“ *Portsmouth, Nov. 6th, 17*

“ *Dearest Agatha,*

“ THE ship does not set sail quite so soon as it was expected ; we may be detained a couple of days at Portsmouth : I therefore gladly avail myself of the opportunity of writing to my beloved wife, though it was only yesterday that I tore myself from her dear arms !

“ Oh, Agatha, what a wretched

night was the last ! What tender recollections, what racking fears, wrung my heart ! My wife, my child, left unprotected ! The husband who would have guarded them from injury with his life, doomed perhaps never to see them more ! The thought was agony ! To add to my tormenting anxiety, a young woman, with her child about two years old, was in the coach. She was the wife of the captain of a merchantman, and was going to meet her husband, after an absence of more than a twelvemonth. Of this husband she spoke in high terms of praise, and her heart seemed to throb with affection ; but, if *he* have the heart of a father, what will his feelings be at seeing his child sickly, and lamed for life, owing, as the mother with sorrow acknowledged, to the bad management and carelessness of his nurse !

Oh, Agatha, my soul recoiled with horror, from the dreadful yet momentary supposition that I might return to find my child thus cruelly neglected ! I shrunk, with superstitious terror, and something like aversion, from the poor little creature, whose infirmities had a claim on my tender commiseration. I could not look at or speak to the mother, who framed excuses for her culpable neglect, without shuddering ; she was pleasing in her person, and seemed to be of an affectionate and grateful disposition, yet she could neglect the most sacred of duties, abandon her child to the mercy of hirelings, and prepare the most bitter affliction for the husband whose kindness to her she so affectionately extolled, and whom she appeared tenderly to love ! Oh God, should I be thus cruelly deceived in my wife !

“Forgive me, dearest Agatha! my fears make me unjust, nay cruel! You love your child! Your solemn promise is pledged! You cannot be guilty of neglect, the most odious and unnatural! Your husband has intrusted the future peace of his life to your tenderness! You will not betray a trust so sacred! Though my dear little boy has for a time lost his anxious and affectionate father, he has a mother, who will not abandon him, who will watch over his infancy with unwearied tenderness, and who, should I perish on the sanguinary field, will remember that a husband’s dying benediction will reward her maternal and conjugal piety!

“I have endeavoured to conquer the superstitious gloom which, since I saw that unfortunate victim of its mother’s neglect, has pervaded my

Such were the excuses which indolence suggested to the self-devoted Agatha. Thoughtless, insensible mother! Her heart was alive to fictitious sensibility, but it was destitute of real feeling. The woman who, after parting with a noble husband, whose agonizing fears and affection she had witnessed, nay, and after receiving such a letter, could, to gratify her selfish indolence, almost immediately break a solemn promise, and neglect her child, to seek relief from novels and romances (to which Agatha resorted); such a woman, I say, neither deserves to be a wife nor a mother! She has neither the heart nor the understanding to fulfil the high duties of so honorable a station.

It is necessary to inform the reader that, previous to the departure of Monroe, after the fourth month, as

ecessary to our dear child ! Do not, my love, yield, to unavailing grief, which will only unfit you for those tender and sacred duties which you are now called upon, more than ever, to perform. Hope the best ! I need not entreat you to give our little cherub a thousand kisses, and, when you press him in your maternal arms, to think of his father ! Once more, adieu ! My heart is with you !”

treated, and well taken care of. The child, inheriting his father's constitution, was naturally robust, and for several months continued strong and healthy in appearance: all, to Agatha's indolent inspection, seemed right, and she wrote the most flattering accounts to the deceived father, of his darling boy.

While Agatha had herself superintended the treatment of her child, it is true, the nursery-maid did her duty; but if mothers neglect their children, can they expect hired nurses to have more natural affection than themselves? Negligence on the part of the mother, may spoil even good and careful nurses. Beside, how inhuman it is to leave a helpless little creature totally in the power of persons who are taught to believe that means which are often pernicious, are requi-

site to make children good! Is it not unpardonable of a mother, who ought to devote herself to the care of her children, to commit their first education to people in every respect so unfit to be entirely trusted?

Nanny, the nursery-maid, fortunately was a neat kind-hearted girl, and had been sufficiently accustomed to young infants to know when they required food, so that little Archibald, though ill-treated in other respects, was regularly fed and kept clean. But Nanny was very passionate, fond of taking her pleasure, and, like her mistress, thought nursing too great a fatigue. She would shake and slap the child, if it cried; fasten it in a chair by the hour together, instead of properly nursing it, and giving its limbs free motion: when she went out with her little charge, which, it must be allowed, was

very often, instead of taking him into the park, or fields, she would go to her acquaintance, and keep the child for hours shut up in a close room. Sometimes she would leave him in the care of an old woman who lived in a cellar in the neighbourhood; but that she never did, unless she were very sure that she should not be met by her mistress, who indeed seldom went out. She fed the child, it is true, but frequently with food very improper for infants: she would give him meat, cheese, butter, toast, fermented liquors, fruit in large quantities, in short, she would fill his little stomach with all sorts of indigestible food. He was beside suffered to play with knives, scissars, or any other dangerous implements, so that it was a miracle the child escaped some fatal accident.

... Such treatment, though the strong

constitution of little Archibald for some time resisted its baneful influence, at length had the evil consequences which might have been expected: the boy grew ricketty, and, from being robust in health, became a sickly child.

Agatha did not at first perceive the change, but at length Nanny, who had her motives for so doing, made her mistress remark it. Agatha was seized with just alarm; the solemn warning of her husband was remembered with terror; yet, unable to act with decision, or to think for herself, she consulted with Nanny, who expected to be so consulted, and in whom she placed a misjudged but implicit confidence, what was best to be done? Nanny advised her mistress to send her with the child a little way into the country; "for all that Master Archi-

bald wanted was a little fresh air, and a nice garden to run about in; he would then soon be well, and gain strength. She had an acquaintance at Richmond, who let lodgings, where she and the child would meet with every convenience and attention. This acquaintance was the most friendly woman in the world! And so fond of children!"

"You shall take him there, immediately," said Agatha; "but I must go too, for Monroe would never forgive me if I were to let his darling go among strangers. He has, to be sure, very particular notions. I own, it is vexatious; for I hate the country till the autumn months; beside, these villages round London are my aversion. But I certainly will go, since my not going would seriously offend a husband to whom I owe all a wife's affection."

“ Lord, Ma’am,” replied Nanny, who did not want the company of her mistress, and who had the art of making that lady think and act as she pleased, “ how should my master, who is the Lord knows how far off, know any thing of the matter ? Beside, Ma’am, if my master were here, seeing your health is so delicate, he could not be so unreasonable as to require such a thing. What should gentlemen know about children ? Shall not I, who have nursed Master Archibald, as one may say, from his birth, be with him ? Is he not as fond of me as if I were his own natural mother ? Do not I keep him clean and wholesome, and give him every thing his little heart can desire ? Why should you, Ma’am, delicate as you are, make yourself a slave ? Surely, Ma’am, you, who, are Master Archibald’s mother, are the best judge

of what is right and proper for him. Trust the sweet little fellow to me, Ma'am, and you will see him come home as strong as a lion."

After a little persuasion, these arguments, bad as they were, were too favorable to her incorrigible indolence not to be adopted by Agatha. She flattered herself that Archibald would return from Richmond in strong health; she had not a doubt of his being properly treated, and well nursed, though, had she exerted a grain of understanding, she must have known that it was improper treatment which had brought him into an ill state of health. Such are the baneful consequences of indolence, and the no less baneful tendency of reading that class of novels which enervates the mind, and teaches any thing but common sense and virtuous activity.

CHAP. VI.

LET us leave the self-devoted Agatha and her neglected infant a while, to return to the high-souled, amiable Monroe. Unfortunate young man! Had he not yielded to the fascination of external beauty, had he suffered his understanding to direct his heart, he would have escaped the misery to which he was destined to fall a victim. Take warning, enthusiastic youth! Be not the slaves of your imagination! Reflect well, before you form an engagement, on which the happiness or misery of yourself and innocent offspring depends!

Monroe, during the nine months he remained in the West Indies, suffered hardships innumerable, and mor-

tifications the most painful to a generous spirit! As from principle however Archibald held duels in detestation, and, as a husband and father, he particularly deemed it incumbent on him to guard his life, whenever his duty did not demand it should be exposed, he carefully avoided altercation, and his military as well as his private conduct was irreproachable. But his colonel, who was jealous of the high esteem in which Monroe was held, both by the commander and the whole garrison, took every opportunity to send him on the hardest service. Such was the base revenge of a little mind! Monroe, though he was aware of the malignity which his superior officer bore him, was too dignified of mind either to retaliate or complain.

Monroe however, by his humanity

and indignant sense of oppression, was involved in a quarrel with his colonel, who, beside having a mean and envious disposition, was cruel to the soldiers, and profligate in his conduct, and Archibald was obliged, against his conscience, to fight a duel.

Bingley, so the colonel was called, had attempted to seduce the wife of a serjeant of the regiment to which he belonged: the woman was pretty but virtuous, and rejected his vicious addresses with scorn. That was sufficient to inflame a man who was rancorous and revengeful of temper, against the husband, and he only waited for a favorable opportunity to gratify his malignity. Roberts, the serjeant, was a man respected by his officers, and beloved by his comrades; his general conduct was excellent, and he strictly observed his military duty; but the

most regular and well-behaved soldier may at some time or other forget himself. Roberts, at the christening of his first child, had the misfortune to get intoxicated (a thing which had never before happened to him), and being aggravated by the colonel's insolent valet, had struck the man, and spoken of Bingley himself with contempt. The colonel eagerly seized this favorable opportunity to be revenged. He took advantage of the commander's being indisposed, to call a court-martial, which being influenced by him, notwithstanding the generous opposition of Monroe, sentenced the poor man to receive a severe flogging, which Bingley insisted should be inflicted almost immediately, fearing, if the sentence reached the ears of the commander, who was confined to his house by indisposition, that it would

be revoked, as that gentleman was no friend to barbarous severity.

Monroe, when the sentence was passed, thought it his duty to seek Colonel Bingley and expostulate with him.

"Colonel," said the generous Monroe, who found that gentleman on the parade, "I come to intercede in behalf of poor Roberts, who I understand is sentenced to a severe punishment for a trivial offence."

"Sir," interrupted Colonel Bingley, "it is in vain to intercede; the man shall be punished."

"Nay, I cannot believe that you will persist, Sir, in your determination, when I remind you that the whole regiment can bear witness to his general good conduct and sobriety."

"I must beg, Sir," answered Bingley, who presuming on his being Mon-

roe's superior in fortune and military rank, affected to act the man of importance, and assumed a haughty demeanor : " I must beg, Sir, I say, that you will not interfere with your superior officer ; that is a liberty, Captain Monroe, that I am not disposed to suffer."

" Colonel Bingley," replied Monroe, in a dignified manner, but with temper, " when humanity demands that I should speak, I neither can nor will be silent. The man has always been punctual to his duty ; he is generally respected for his good conduct, and this is his first offence : it is but trivial. Pray be persuaded, and pardon Roberts."

" Sir, I say, your interference is a liberty that I shall not admit of. The man shall be punished ! An insolent, idle fellow ! I know him well !"

“ And so do I, Sir,” replied Monroe; and I, as well as many others, know too the cause of the enmity you bear him: therefore, if you would not reflect indelible disgrace on your character, revoke your sentence, and pardon Roberts.”

“ Sir, I am not to be threatened out of my determination; the man shall be punished.”

“ Then I, Sir,” continued Monroe, “ think it my duty instantly to go and acquaint the commander with this flagrant abuse of power.”

“ Sir, your conduct is not that of a gentleman,” angrily retorted Colonel Bingley, “ and I shall expect you this evening at seven o'clock, with pistols, in the Palm-tree Walk, to give me satisfaction for this treatment. Provide yourself with a second, I shall bring a friend; and so, Sir, I wish you a good morning.”

Thus speaking, the savage Colonel Bingley walked away, to brag to a fellow officer, "that he had challenged Captain Monroe, whom he hoped to shoot through the head, for his insolent interference."

At hearing this challenge, the soul of Monroe recoiled: he pictured to himself his wife and child left friendless, to struggle in a hard world, deprived of a husband and father's tender protection: in imagination, he beheld the distress of his beloved Agatha, saw her helpless state, and heard her heart-rending lamentations. Agony shook his frame; for a moment he stood fixed to the spot, unable to move. But the sight of the distracted wife of Roberts, who with streaming eyes and wringing hands vainly implored her husband's pardon, roused him at length from the stupor of anguish. He made a convulsive effort,

and hastened to the house of the commander, with whom he was on terms of friendship, in a state of mind which can better be imagined than described.

He was silent on the subject of the duel, but he spoke warmly in behalf of the poor serjeant. The commander, who was a humane and worthy man, was justly indignant at the barbarity of the colonel, and immediately dispatched an order to release Roberts, with a full pardon.

The rage of the malignant Bingley may easily be conceived, as well as the gratitude and joy of the poor serjeant and his wife, who loaded Monroe with benedictions. Archibald however, who saw himself obliged, against his principles, to fight a duel, and that with his superior officer, and to risk the loss of his life, which, for the sake of his beloved wife and child,

he was anxious to preserve, remained in a state of mind worthy of pity. If he did not meet the ferocious colonel, his honor would be irrevocably lost; and though honor, such as military men have adopted, be a false and vicious principle, he must submit to the tyranny of custom.

Monroe however did not suffer his mental anguish to incapacitate him from taking the necessary precautions for the welfare of his little family, in case he should be killed in the duel. He wrote short but precise directions, with respect to the transmitting of the property he had with him to his wife. With a soul harrowed by connubial and paternal affection, he wrote a letter, to be sent in case of his death to his excellent uncle, whom he revered as a father, and whose zealous affection he had through life experienced. In this

letter Monroe conjured Mr. Strathmore to be the guardian of his child, and to protect his widowed Agatha, if she followed her son to India.

He likewise wrote to his beloved Agatha, for whose future fate he trembled, knowing the indolence of her mind and habits, her total ignorance of the world, and the pernicious influence which the continual reading of novels and romances, that had neither common sense nor dignity of feeling to recommend them, must have on her actions, when under no salutary restraint: for though Monroe tenderly loved his wife, and was by no means severe, he felt that his superior mind gave him the right to direct; indeed Agatha was like a child, who could not act or think for herself. She would consequently be at the mercy of every artful person, who, as she had

uncommon beauty, when they saw she had no husband or relation to detect or resent their unprincipled conduct, and that her mind was weak, would think her a fit object for their licentious pursuits.

As the letter which he wrote to Agatha may interest those who sympathize in the feelings of the tender and dignified Monroe, I shall insert it. The following were its contents :

*“ The Island of **, 17***

“ OH, Agatha, my heart is torn by contending passions ! Perhaps it is for the last time that I write to my beloved wife ! The last time ?—Oh, Agatha ! Shall I never again press you to my throbbing heart ! Never again fold in my arms the dear pledge of our love !—My mind is so distracted that I do not make myself intelligible. I

have just received a challenge: this evening I must either meet a man I despise, or be stigmatized a coward! In three short hours perhaps I may be numbered among the dead! Our child will be left fatherless, and you, my Agatha, will be thrown on a dangerous world, without protection! Oh God! The thought is agony! Why cannot I brave the tyranny of custom! the unjust contempt of the world! Must I sacrifice my helpless child, and my beloved wife, to that false honor, which is equally condemned by morality and the law? Were I alone to suffer, by refusing wantonly to expose a life which I owe my country, I would meet the consequences, and my internal feelings would atone for the injustice of the world: but the dishonor I should incur would reflect on those dearest to me, nay, do them

perhaps irreparable injury! My dear boy would grow up to be reproached with his father's infamy, my beloved Agatha would be pointed at as the wife of a coward! Death itself is preferable to disgrace like this!—Yet when I think that, should I fall, you will be left, beautiful and inexperienced as you are, with your imagination filled with false and romantic pictures of life, without a friend to protect you, and without having that mental activity and fortitude which in themselves would be the best of protections, when I recollect my dear boy, who will need a father's experience and vigilance to direct his youth, I am distracted! If my dear and respected uncle were in England I should die consoled, for he would protect my Agatha, and be a father to our child.

“ Oh, Agatha, by the dear affection I have ever borne you, by every tender and sacred tie, I conjure you to observe my last and solemn request! (for when you receive this letter I shall no longer be among the living).

“ I shall write to my uncle, and bequeath our Archibald to his generous care, as soon as his tender infancy will allow of his taking so long a voyage; till then my heart assures me that you will persevere in fulfilling those maternal duties, of which I am persuaded you now feel the importance. Oh, Agatha!—when we parted, I left you with a heart wrung with anguish! To tear myself from your arms and the dear pledge of our love, inflicted a pang as great as that I at this moment feel—yet, I sacrificed the feelings of the father and the husband to my tender anxiety for your health in this

feverish country: but the same danger does not attach itself to the climate of India; the voyage, by rousing you to some degree of exertion, would in all probability strengthen your frame. Need I conjure you not to abandon your child, or remain in England unprotected, and exposed to dangers which it makes me shudder but to surmise? Will not you shake off that destructive indolence, in which you have too long indulged, at the dying request of a husband, whose heart is wrung with excruciating fears and agonizing tenderness?—Oh yes! I should wrong both your maternal affection and the love you bear me, were I to doubt of your compliance! I shall die in peace! You, my Agatha, will find a kind protector in my uncle, and a friend who will aid to console you for my loss! My child will gain a second

father! With my parting breath I shall invoke blessings on your heads! Could I but once more press you to this anxious heart, and breathe my last in your dear arms!—The wish is barbarous! Oh, may my Agatha be spared every bitter pang! May she never feel the agony which now convulses this frame! Agatha! I feel my blood run cold—my shaking hand refuse to write *farewell for ever!!*

“ Your ever devoted,

“ but half distracted,

“ MONROE.”

As the letter to Mr. Strathmore only contained a repetition of the excruciating fears and manly tenderness which harrowed the soul of the agonized Monroe, I shall not lay it before the reader. Both these letters Archibald directed and sealed with black,

leaving them in the care of the friend who was to be his second, and whom he begged to send them, if he should be killed, enclosed in a letter from himself, acquainting Agatha and Mr. Strathmore with the particulars of his death.

He then repaired to the place of rendezvous, a little before the appointed hour, with a heart wrung by conjugal and paternal tenderness, taking his friend with him.

Colonel Bingley, inflamed with rancour, and eager to satiate his vengeance in blood, was already there with a fellow officer. He fired first, and slightly wounded Monroe in the shoulder. Monroe, who shrunk with horror from having deliberate murder on his conscience, fired his pistol in the air. This generous and unexpected forbearance even moved the cruel revengeful Bingley; the seconds

proposed an accommodation, which both parties accepted.

At the moment of reconciliation, Monroe and his adversary were put under arrest, but they were almost immediately released. It was known that Monroe had not given the challenge, and his humanity, generous forbearance, and contempt of personal danger, were loudly applauded by the whole garrison. The commander loudly joined in the public voice, and reprimanded Bingley. This envious and savage officer, as long as Monroe remained in the island, awed by his superior virtues, treated Archibald with respect, and took care to conceal the envy which still rankled in his breast. He was indeed soon after this affair again indebted to Monroe for his life, in a battle which took place.

Monroe soon recovered from the slight wound he had received, the letters he had written to his wife and uncle were not sent, and he returned fervent thanks to Heaven that his life had been thus providentially preserved, for his dear Agatha and their helpless infant.

CHAP. VII.

MONROE lived with strict economy, as much from principle as for the sake of his wife and child; but his heart was no less generous than humane, and though he husbanded his income, he never denied that relief which he could afford to real distress without doing material injury to his family. He would rather suffer personal inconvenience than forbear to aid the worthy.

The following instance of his generous self-denial, and disinterested benevolence, will not, I hope, be displeasing to the reader.

The owner of a small plantation near the place where Monroe happened to be encamped with a detachment of troops, by heavy and unexpect-

ed losses, was driven to the brink of ruin. He was an honest worthy man, humane to his slaves, kind to his neighbours, and an excellent husband and father. He had a wife and five young children; and, through the hard-hearted avarice of a creditor, a wealthy planter to whom he owed two thousand pounds, he saw himself on the point of being dragged to prison, and his wife and helpless children driven from their home, without the means of subsistence.

This man, whose name was Dalby, was a new settler; he was an Englishman, and had once been a rich London tradesman; but having met with great vexations and losses, he had embarked with the wreck of his fortune, to purchase a small plantation in the island where Monroe was stationed. For the first three or four

years, by unremitting industry and active intelligence, his affairs had prospered beyond his hopes; but violent hurricanes for two succeeding years, which destroyed his crops and did considerable damage to the plantation, threw him into difficulties, that were increased by the dishonesty of a man with whom he transacted business, till he was driven at length to the distress I have described.

This man was only known by reputation to Monroe; but the intelligence of his misfortunes and impending ruin soon reached that gentleman's ear. Monroe had heard Mr. Dalby mentioned in terms of high esteem and respect, by persons in whose judgment he could place confidence. Every one pitied Dalby, and blamed his hard-hearted creditor, yet those who had it in their power, having

too many false wants of their own to supply, did not generously come forward to his relief.

Monroe had money and credit at his command, but to risk them at this time might put him to great personal inconvenience; and it was beside uncertain if it would be in the power of Dalby to repay him, his affairs were supposed to be in so desperate a condition; but the planter was allowed by all to be a worthy man; a prison was a hateful thing; and Dalby had a wife and young family, who would be in danger of starving, if they were robbed of the husband and father from whose industry and active intelligence they had hitherto derived their support. Monroe, with a delicacy which did honour to his heart, wrote a letter to honest Dalby, in which he professed a high esteem for the planter's

character, expressed a desire to cultivate his friendship, apologized for the liberty he took, and, saying that he only did what he held to be an act of duty, begged that he would suffer him, as a friend, to advance money, which Dalby might return when his affairs should again wear a prosperous face, and become his bail for the remainder. He concluded the letter with conjuring the planter to wave all scruples, which, between men of honor, were unnecessary, and permit him immediately to wait on him as a friend.

The messenger Monroe sent was desired to wait for an answer.

When Dalby, who expecting every hour to be dragged to prison, was encircled by his weeping family, read the letter of the generous Monroe, tears of admiration and gratitude forced their way down his cheek.

“ Oh, Sarah,” said the worthy planter, wildly embracing his wife, “ we are saved from destruction ! Read this letter ! and bless our noble benefactor ! Oh, my dear children, an angel has snatched you from beggary and disgrace ! Almighty Providence, thy goodness never slumbers ! The vicious only need despair in the hour of adversity ! ”

The wife read the letter which brought them aid so unexpected, with emotions no less rapturous and grateful than those of her husband, and invoked benedictions on the benevolent stranger. Dalby, with a heart overflowing with gratitude, yet too agitated to express his feelings, except by incoherent sentences, wrote a short note in answer, which he sent by Monroe's servant.

Monroe immediately hastened to the worthy family, and in their fervent

gratitude, and almost frantic joy, his kind and generous heart found a rich reward. The personal inconvenience and risk he suffered became a source of gratification: he saved the honest planter from destruction, and before he quitted the island, Monroe had the satisfaction of seeing Dalby's affairs in a prosperous way: Archibald would not suffer him to return the sum he had advanced, which would have put the planter to great inconvenience; but that worthy man forced him to receive bills on English houses, which were duly honored, and in a few years Dalby acquired a fortune sufficient to content his moderate desires, and honorably maintain his family. The memory of their noble friend never died, and Monroe was remembered with esteem and respect by the whole island.

We must now inquire into the military career of the amiable Monroe, which gained him no less reputation than his private virtues.

About seven months after his arrival in the island, it was invaded by the enemy ; but in a decisive engagement the invaders were totally routed. Monroe behaved with uncommon gallantry ; he saved the life of his colonel, displayed no less presence of mind than courage, set an example of humanity to his soldiers, and fortunately escaped with a slight wound. The whole army bore testimony to his gallant conduct, and the commander made honorable mention of Monroe in his dispatches, and promoted him to the rank of major.

The health of Monroe, however, was injured by the climate, and the hardships he underwent. A few

months after the enemy had been driven from the island, he was attacked by the yellow fever, and had nearly sunk under its violence; but, alas, he was reserved for sufferings more fatal. He slowly recovered, and as the island was now in perfect security, he obtained a furlough, to return for a certain time to England for the re-establishment of his health.

Monroe hoped, when in England, to obtain an exchange into a regiment which might be stationed in some part of Great Britain, where he could take his wife and child. That he might agreeably surprise his beloved Agatha, whose letters had led him to expect that all was right at home, he would not prepare her for his sudden return. He pictured to himself her surprise, her delight, and the maternal pride with which she would present their

little Archibald, who no doubt must be a fine robust little fellow, and whose cherub smiles would make him forget all the hardships and sorrows he had undergone, while separated from his beloved little family, and that happy home in which his whole heart was centered. When he had written to England, he had forbore to speak of his difficulties, hard service, and ill health ; he feared to make his Agatha unhappy. He hoped, at the cheerful-breakfast table, with his dear little boy on his knee and his wife by his side, to recount his former sufferings, rejoice in his present felicity, and form pleasing prospects for the future. Deceitful hope ! How often do thy flattering illusions picture a delightful path, and conceal the dreadful precipice to which it leads !

With these golden, and, alas,

false dreams, the tender and enthusiastic Monroe sailed for England : while he is on his voyage, let us inquire after the wife and child he is so anxious again to fold in his arms, and clasp to his manly heart. Let us ask, what will be the feelings of the wife, on whose maternal tenderness he implicitly relies, and whether she can present her child with a mother's fond pride, to the husband to whom she pledged her solemn promise that she would watch over her charge with vigilant affection ?

CHAP. VIII.

THE little Archibald, under the care of Nanny, was sent by the indolent mother to Richmond, for three or four months, to regain his strength and health. Instead of Agatha's going in person to visit the boy, that she might be certain he was properly treated, Nanny was to bring him twice a week to town. Agatha, too indolent herself to watch over the health and safety of her child, expected that a hired nurse would have the watchful anxiety of a good mother.

For the first eight weeks Archibald was regularly brought to his mother, who, though the child continued ricketty and ill, was persuaded by the artful nursery-maid that he was taken

excellent care of, and that time was only wanting to make him quite well. But Nanny formed acquaintance among the idle servants of the gentlemen's families who had their summer residence at Richmond, and soon grew tired of going backward and forward to London. She complained to her mistress, that "Master Archibald always fretted after having been home, which made him ill ; and that, if his mother wished him to grow strong and healthy, she must forbear entirely from seeing the child till he returned home for good and all."

Agatha, who from a child had never taken the trouble to think or decide for herself, suffered Nanny, as usual, to direct her, and more than six weeks elapsed without her seeing little Archibald. Nanny wrote from time to time, to say that her charge was gra-

dually gaining strength, and that another month or two would no doubt bring him round. Nanny, who amused herself to her heart's content, had no wish to quit Richmond before her new acquaintance should return to town.

Such acquaintance, as it may be supposed, did the girl no good, and poor little Archibald was more than ever neglected: instead of gaining health and strength, he daily grew more weak of constitution and body. The woman of the house, who was described by Nanny to be *so fond of children*, like many foolish people, would let them eat to excess, and of whatever they liked, and would give them any thing which they cried for; but she would not in the least put herself out of her way to keep them from mischief, or pay them the necessary attention.

For three months Archibald, though frequently hurt through the carelessness of his nurse, who suffered him to play with any thing, however improper, that lay in his way, by miracle escaped any serious injury ; and Nanny, like those silly people who think because an accident has never yet happened, that it never will happen, trusting to chance instead of her own careful attention, took it for granted that no harm would befall the child. As to his health, " he was naturally sickly, she was sure ; and all the care and pains in the world could not make him otherwise. If her mistress, when she saw the child, should be dissatisfied, she could not help it ; she had done her best : if his own mother could not make him well, how could she ? Beside, her acquaintance had promised to get her a place of lady's

maid in some great family when she returned to London; so it mattered little whether her mistress were pleased or not."

Oh, ye thoughtless mothers, shudder thus to abandon your offspring to mercenary hirelings! Reflect on consequences before you forego one of the sweetest and most sacred of duties. Picture to yourselves the injury, mental and bodily, to which you expose helpless innocents, whose health and moral habits it is your duty to watch over with vigilant tenderness, whose future misery or happiness depends on you! Let them not have cause hereafter to accuse you as the authors of their feeble health or moral vices!

Agatha, in the mean while, sunk into the apathy of indolence, and daily more and more enervated by the pernicious reading of novels and ro-

manoees, which frequently had not the merit of imagination to recommend them; for those excellent novels which inculcate pure morality, or give an animated picture of life, and censure its follies, are few, and she had not the habit of selecting; Agatha, I say, little foresaw the dreadful calamity which awaited to rouse her from her lethargic apathy to frantic anguish and excruciating remorse!

The gallant conduct and promotion of Monroe had reached her ears, as well through the public papers as from the letters of that tender and deserving husband. She felt on the occasion, as the heroines of romance are described to feel; her joy was irrational, and the letters of her beloved husband were read with romantic transport, but the excellent advice they contained was in a week forgotten.

The crisis of Agatha's fate now approached. One afternoon, as that lady was sitting in the drawing-room, on the sofa, reading, as usual, some foolish romance, a post-chaise stopt at the door, and a loud rap was heard.

"Good Heavens! Who can it be?" exclaimed Agatha, alarmed by the loudness of the rap, and going slowly to the window to look.

The chaise door flew open, and Monroe, the husband she supposed so far off, and whom at this moment she justly dreaded to see, alighted: she caught his eye, his arms instinctively spread open as if to receive his beloved wife. Almost fainting, and shrinking with convulsive terror, Agatha leaned against the wainscot: her limbs were rivetted to the spot! Instead of flying to welcome the dear husband who had so long been absent, who deserved

her tenderest affection, and whom; but for the consciousness of having disobeyed his solemn injunctions, and broken a promise which ought to have been held sacred, she would have met with transport. Agatha stood, conscience-struck, distracted what to say or do, and trembled violently as she heard his footsteps. The door was thrown open! Monroe eagerly rushed in! Still Agatha, self-condemned, and fearing to meet the husband she adored, had not the power to move. A flood of tears gave some relief to her oppressed heart. The tender Monroe, who attributed her agitation and tears to a very different cause, flew to his wife, caught her in his arms, and pressed her again and again to his heart.

“Agatha, dearest Agatha,” said he; “pardon your Archibald for coming

thus unexpectedly upon you! I see I was wrong, but I could not resist the pleasure of giving you an agreeable surprise. I fear, my love, it has been too sudden, and that you are overcome. I shall never forgive myself, if I have exposed your delicate frame to too great a shock. Compose yourself, dearest Agatha," continued the fond husband, leading her to the sofa, and tell me where is our sweet boy? From the flattering accounts you have given me of him in your letters, he is no doubt by this time a little Hercules. You see I am not quite so healthy as when I left you. I have suffered much, but my sufferings will be more than repaid when I am seated by my Agatha's side, and have our smiling little fellow on my knee! How unjust was I a moment to doubt the heart of a mother!

Oh, take compassion on my impatience, and let Archibald be brought to me, if he be at home. This I feel is the happiest moment of my life."

Wofully deceived, and too confiding husband, what bitter pangs await thee!

Every word Monroe uttered was a dagger to the self-condemned mother: the praise he so warmly bestowed, seemed to aggravate her guilt: how could she inform her husband that she had sent her child away from her, that he was in a sickly state of health, and that she had not seen him for six weeks or more? She at length collected a sort of desperate courage, and said, in as firm a tone of voice as she could command:

"Archibald is in the country."

"Is in the country!" exclaimed Monroe, in a tone of astonishment.

“ Oh, gone to some friend for a day’s pleasure ; but I suppose he will soon be at home, for evening draws on apace, and you would hardly let him stay out all night, without you were with him. I must have a little patience. But, why, my love, do you look disturbed ?” [Monroe’s former fears were suddenly awakened by the visible agitation of his wife, who scarcely dared to raise her eyes, which the first transports of their meeting had not permitted him to remark, but which now began to create serious alarm.] “ Surely, nothing is amiss ? The child is perfectly safe ?”

“ Oh, yes,” replied Agatha in a tremulous voice, “ but he has not for some time past been well, and he is at Richmond, with Nanny, who says that in another month or two he will be quite strong. He fretted so

much for me, after being brought by his nursery-maid to town, that we judged it prudent to let him stay entirely at Richmond till he should be quite well."

The countenance of Monroe, pale with recent sickness, was instantly flushed with indignation: he let go the hand of Agatha, which he held, and rose angry and agitated;

"My child ill, and deserted by its mother! Is this, madam," continued Monroe, turning to the trembling Agatha, while his expressive eyes sparkled indignantly, "is this the solemn promise you made me? Could you deceive me into dangerous security, and express the feelings of a mother, while you were acting with less love toward your offspring than the brute creation, which do not leave their young till they can take care

of themselves? Shame upon such affected sensibility, such odious deceit? If you were destitute of feeling, why make me believe you had the heart of a mother? My poor boy! Had I been in the situation of thy mother, I would not have abandoned thee to the mercy of strangers! I would have foregone every pleasure, to have watched over the health and safety of my child. Oh, God! do I return to find thee more neglected, perhaps, than my worst alarms suggest! To see thee probably robbed for life of those invaluable blessings which health and active strength bestow? And is it thy mother, whose unnatural neglect has entailed the curse of disease on thee?"

Agatha, cut to the soul by the passionate reproaches of her deeply offended husband, yet conscious they were but too just, answered only with

her tears. Monroe, walking to and fro with a perturbed step and a mind still more agitated, perceived the book Agatha had been reading lying open upon a table: he took it, read the title, and, indignantly dashing it on the ground, thus continued to give vent to the anguish of his heart:

“So, is it for trash like this, that your Archibald is abandoned! Instead of reading moral books, that would teach you your duty, or such as would store your mind with useful knowledge, you deprave your understanding with pernicious works, without the shadow of merit or originality, which shut your heart against true feeling, to nurture false enervating sensibility! After suffering hardships and dangers innumerable, and lying on a lingering bed of sickness, while my whole soul was devoted to my

wife and child, I return to find my glowing hopes disappointed, my domestic peace destroyed, and my child abandoned by the woman I loved with unceasing fondness, on whose affection and solemn promise I blindly relied! Where is my child? Tell me where to find him! I will not sleep till I have seen him! Though his mother has deserted him, he shall find he has still a father! Tell me where to find him!" repeated Monroe, passionately.

Agatha, drowned in tears, was about to reply, when the door was hastily opened by the servant, who, with consternation and alarm on her face, told her mistress that a man from Richmond wanted to speak with her, about Master Archibald, and some accident.

Agatha, ready to sink with terror, was going to follow the girl; but Monroe, in a voice which made both

the maid and mistress tremble, commanded his wife to remain where she was, and desired the man might be sent up stairs.

How dreadful were the feelings which agitated the wretched Monroe, and the trembling Agatha! but those of the self-condemned mother were the most agonizing: they approached to phrenzy! She stood panting with horrid suspense! Her husband, no less alarmed, pale as death, his mind distracted, his heart agonized, threw himself on the sofa, and struck his burning forehead with violence: his teeth gnashed, and there was a terrific incoherence in his eye.

When the man came, Monroe, starting up wildly, desired him to speak the worst at once, and not to keep them in suspense.

The man, who lived in the house

where Nanny and the child boarded, then informed the distracted parents, that "little Archibald that morning, being left by his nursery-maid in a hurry, sitting at an open window in a room three stories high, had climbed up, leaned too far over, fallen out, and been killed on the spot; that Nanny, frightened to death, almost immediately after, took away her clothes, and left the house, and that he was sent by the proprietor to inform Mrs. Monroe of the shocking accident."

At this dreadful intelligence, Monroe, in a paroxysm of agony, yet terrified at beholding the anguish of his still beloved wife, who stood in a stupor of horror, her intellects wandering, exclaimed:

"Agatha, you have broken my heart! But you are sufficiently punished! Your husband forgives you!"

Alas, Agatha was no longer in a condition to receive consolation from the generous husband, who, agonized as his feelings were, still felt compassion for the wretched being who had been the source of his misery: her mind and frame, rendered peculiarly weak by the fatal indulgence of indolence, sunk under the fearful conflict: she fell senseless on the floor!

When the wretched mother came to herself, phrenzy seized her: she gave a piercing shriek, called on her child, on her husband, whom she no longer knew though he hung over her with agonizing tenderness, accused herself of being a murderess, and invoked curses on her head! She at length grew so outrageous, that she was forced to be secured. Monroe himself, in a state of mind little short of distraction, watched day and night by the side of the

suffering Agatha, and tried by every means to save her life; but his tender cares were ineffectual; she was seized with a brain fever, and after suffering excruciating agony for a few days, expired in the arms of her broken-hearted, but still affectionate husband!

During the night on which she died, her senses returned; and she had the melancholy consolation of knowing that her errors were forgiven, and that she was still beloved by the generous and noble-minded Monroe.

Such are the dreadful consequences of indolence!

The wretched husband, on the death of his wife, was seized with a violent fever, which threatened to be fatal; but his youth, and the natural strength of his constitution, again snatched him from the grave. On his recovery, Monroe

did not return to the West Indies; but, unable to endure the sight of places and objects which incessantly reminded him of the dreadful loss he had sustained, he almost immediately obtained an exchange into a regiment that was going to embark for India. He arrived safe in that country, after a long and dangerous voyage, and acted so as to gain the friendship and esteem both of the English and the natives, who often experienced his generous and humane attentions.

The worthy uncle, Mr. Strathmore, received his valued nephew with cordial affection, mingled with bitter regret. The miserable end of the wretched Agatha gave him sincere concern; but he was more deeply grieved at seeing the afflicting change which illness and domestic misery had wrought in the once happy and animated Mon-

roe. The worthy gentleman however was suddenly recalled to England soon after his nephew's arrival, and did not again return to India.

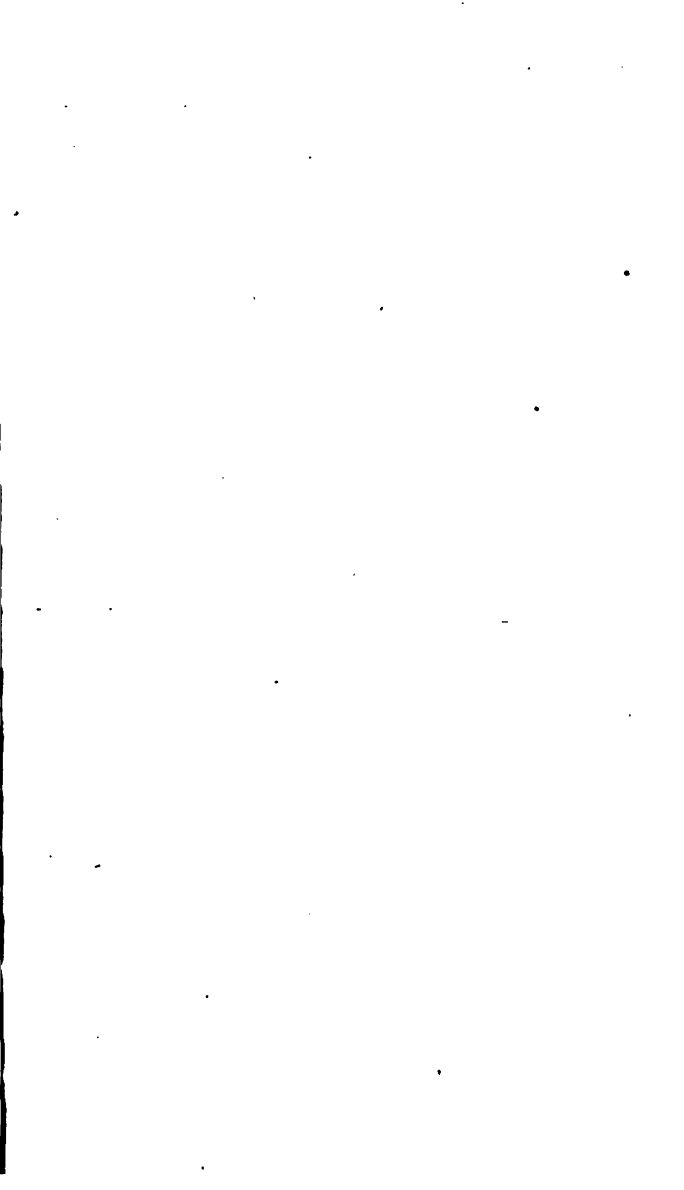
Monroe spent ten years in active virtue, but he could never forget his wife and child; the recollection of former felicity preyed upon his heart, and would not suffer him to be happy, even when performing the sweet duties of friendship and humanity. The cruel disappointment he had met with in his sanguine hopes of conjugal happiness, made him shrink with terror from a second union. He spent the few years he survived his beloved wife in the conscientious exercise of his military duty, and in the practice of every virtue, beloved and respected by the good, and died on the field of battle, mortally wounded, at the taking of*****. His last words, when expiring in the arms

of a friend and fellow officer, were :
 " Death is welcome ! I go to rejoin
 Agatha and my child ! "

Peace to thy ashes, amiable but too
 confiding Monroe ! May thy virtues
 and sufferings ever live in memory, to
 guard youth against rash enthusiasm !
 And may thy wretched fate, oh, self-
 destroyed Agatha, be a timely warning
 to the indolent ! And may the judicious
 parent, or guardian, who expels this
 contagion in its birth, be justly ho-
 noured, and held forth to imitation !

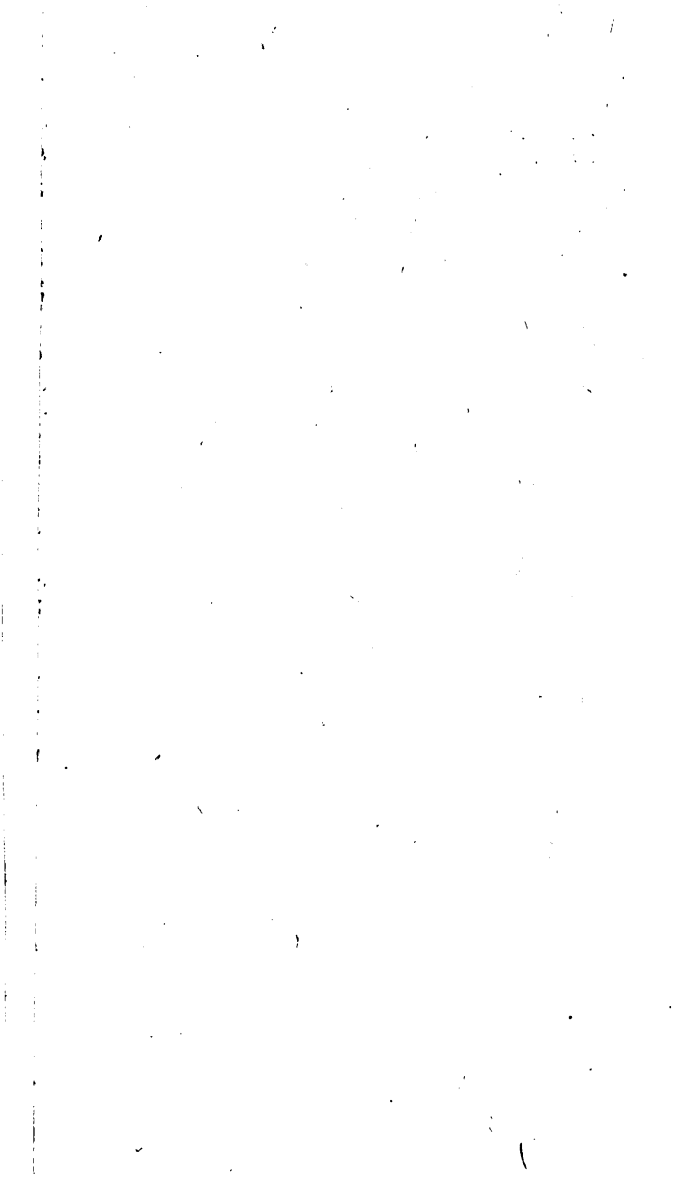
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